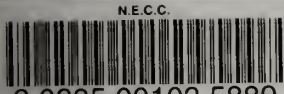



PARNASSUS

Spring 2000



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PARNASSUS

Inter-Arts Magazine
of Northern Essex
Community College

Haverhill, Massachusetts 01830

The policy of the editorial staff has been to
select material for the magazine democratically.

We have read each work submitted and viewed
all artwork.

We voted to determine eligibility; a majority
vote for a piece meant publication.

Parnassus provides an opportunity for new
artists and writers to reach others; it's a showcase
of Northern Essex Community College
student creativity.

Parnassus
is the
name
of the
mythological
mountain
home
of the
nine
muses
who inspired
humankind
in the
arts.



Josh

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Chances Are

It was one of those beautiful summer days when you couldn't bear to face the chores needing to be done around the house, despite the piles of soiled laundry, layers of dust on the furniture and uncut, straggly lawn calling to be mowed. We left the house and yard work without any plans except to spend the day together. We drove into town, windows open with the top down, my hair still wet from the shower, now drying in the warm breeze. We started some serious talking somewhere on 495 South just before Andover, but by the time we went over the Interstate 95 interchange we had started to argue.

Looking back it seemed more like an argument of two people first dating than between a couple married almost a decade. I'd like to say I could remember what the argument was about, or why, on such a lovely Sunday afternoon, it even started, but I can't. It had to be something unimportant, I suppose, since the memory of what it was really all about seems lost forever.

Looking back I believe my husband wanted to be somewhere else that day, at work on a project weighing on his mind and he was doing his best to be as distant as possible. But that's my memory and as anyone in a relationship knows there are at least two sides to every story and both are always the absolute truth, depending on the person you ask. If you ask him what happened I was bringing up the past, the same issues we hashed out over and over and there was not one good reason to bring it up on such a glorious day. With both of us having such different agendas and so many other issues on our minds, in retrospect the day was ruined before it even began.

Those were the days when I was working evenings and weekends and my husband kept regular daytime business hours. Our major means of communication were notes left to each other on the refrigerator, telephone calls during the day, a card left by a supper or breakfast dish. He was an early riser who liked to get to work as soon as he could to start the day. I worked until midnight and needed a few hours to wind down at night. We would

talk on my ride home, indebted to the cell phone. At first he would wait up for me until I got home at twelve-thirty or one o'clock in the morning. Soon, however, it became more difficult for my husband to stay up late and rise early. I found myself frequently coming home to a dark, quiet house.

The problem didn't seem to be major communication. When we did get the chance to talk we were able to communicate well. It was the loss of these nightly calls on the ride home, busy nights at my workplace preventing me from calling home, hectic work days for my husband, which made connecting on a daily basis difficult. And it was the day to day connecting that helped us maintain strong communication as a couple so that when we did have waking hours together we didn't look at each other and wonder who the other person was.

And so came this glorious summer Sunday and we were both together, driving into Boston, trying to connect after a week apart working opposite schedules. The sun beating down with the top down was hot. Perhaps one of us had wanted the top up, the other down, for the drive in. We hadn't eaten, then couldn't agree on a restaurant that wouldn't have a wait. We kept circling the block looking for a parking space. We argued on how much to pay for parking, one of us being appalled the other would consider that amount. Any small conflict that any other time would have passed unceremoniously by unnoticed now became a major issue. Physically the distance in the car was only a foot but emotionally it seemed to be expanding by the minute.

My husband threatened to turn around and go back to work. I accused him of running away to something simpler to deal with than our relationship. He argued that I had ruined the day by bringing up old disagreements that weren't going to be solved today, why not forget about them and move on. I told him I wasn't going to waste one of the few weekend days I had off at home waiting for him at work. He dug in his heels and became more stubborn and determined to go into his office to work. I dug mine in even further and told him he could go but I wasn't going back with him.

I crossed the line when I threatened to get out of the car right then and there and stay in Boston myself. He pulled over and made no attempt to stop me. Out of the corner of my eye I could see him facing the windshield, his mind made up. I didn't have a purse with me and fumbled for some money, pulling change off the floor and from the glass jar I kept for tolls. I emptied it into my backpack, feeling the weight of a jar full of coins resting on my lap. I looked him in the eye and asked if he were sure he really wanted me to do this. That we could just figure it out. But his mind was made up, and my own stubbornness and pride wouldn't allow me to not follow through with my threat of staying in town. So I got out of the car and started walking down Marlborough Street toward Newbury Street. I never looked back.

Tears began to stream down my face as soon as I walked away and it was all I could do to not start sobbing right there in the middle of the street. I was seven and a half months pregnant, and just starting to feel some of the effects of gaining twenty pounds. I was hot and thirsty. We never did find a place for lunch and the hunger which I had felt an hour earlier returned in full force. I was still crying and fought to control the tears. I walked quickly and purposefully, as if I had some idea of where I was going.

I walked up and down Newbury Street, although I can't remember where I ate or much else of what I did. I do know that I went into the bookstore my husband and I liked to frequent together. It was the one at the end of Newbury, almost to Mass. Ave., a used bookstore called Victor Hugo's we had been to numerous times. We sometimes would end up in different sections, browsing in the areas of our own interests and then uncannily know when each was ready to leave. It wasn't the same without him there that day and I missed him terribly. The bookstore was dark and cool; it was a relief to be in the air conditioning on such a hot day. I tried to enjoy searching the stacks, trying to lose myself in a novel as I crouched against one of the ladders propped up against the shelves. But I just felt sad and lonely and very pregnant which made it all so much worse.

I caught the green line to North Station later in the day, chancing the trains to Haverhill were running every hour or so on the weekend schedule. By then I was exhausted, my head nodding to one side as I stood waiting for the train to pull into the station. I fell asleep on the ride back, curled up against the cool window, pulling my body close, the blast of cold air coming from the vents giving me a headache. I got off at the Bradford station, prepared for a long walk home. I saw the car in the parking lot before I even disembark, my husband sheepishly hunched at the wheel, wearing a frustrated smile and shaking his head.

I don't like to think about that day. It seemed to bring out the worst in both of us, our most awful traits. I like to think we've come a long way since that day when we went our separate ways. If only for a short time it felt too long. We try not to let things go too far, to forgive and get over an argument faster. We laugh much more and don't take ourselves too seriously. And we try to take care of our marriage, nurturing it like a tree putting in stronger roots each year. Yet each time I do look back I am humbled by the fragility of a marriage, and how each encounter, good or bad, becomes a part of your history as a couple.

R.J.



Julia S. Hemond

Citadel

Terror in the attic
 The belt's stinging kiss
 Bruising my dilapidated temple
 My mind is static
 Vietnam in the morning flickering through his thoughts
 Oh but that's not pain
 A brick wall around his egocentrically filthy flesh
 False emotions, ephemeral love, his wife's a bitch
 Gigantic brainwashed puppet
 You were always fantastically egregious
 Soldier of vanity
 And I, father, am a heretic a liar
 And eccentric disaster of sin
 Whipped and tortured for what?
 Abuse runs through our genes
 So I eat the mystical mushrooms
 Cementing myself in. I am thin. I am grim
 Gauche and queer
 I breathe your fear. I am your worst nightmare.
 I am your son
 What have you done?

Meanwhile I flashback to my teens
 Noise from the radio
 Vietnam: say it isn't so
 I've got stains in my genes
 The smog from the kitchen
 The fog of your hell
 Floats in our heads, two disconnected twins
 I call you him. You call me "her son"
 My mother in the shower
 The cold water turned on by me
 A childish mistake
 But to you a disastrous venomous prank
 The switch of your bomb, I uprooted your flower
 Increased by hysterical vacuous screams
 I'm going to hell

My earring ripping my flesh
 The leather belt ready to teach
 Whipped across the floor, I can't yell
 Whipped until I'm blue, I mustn't tell
 Oh god what do I do?
 The incessant brutality and vexations never stop
 You told me I was stupid, meaningless

Splitting me like ice into a million bits
 He leaves my chamber of madness
 My mind divides, shakes and spits
 Blood spewing on the floor
 The locking of my door
 Caged in at fourteen
 An open gate to acid trips
 I am miserable
 I breathe your fear, I am a nightmare.
 I am your son
 What have you done?

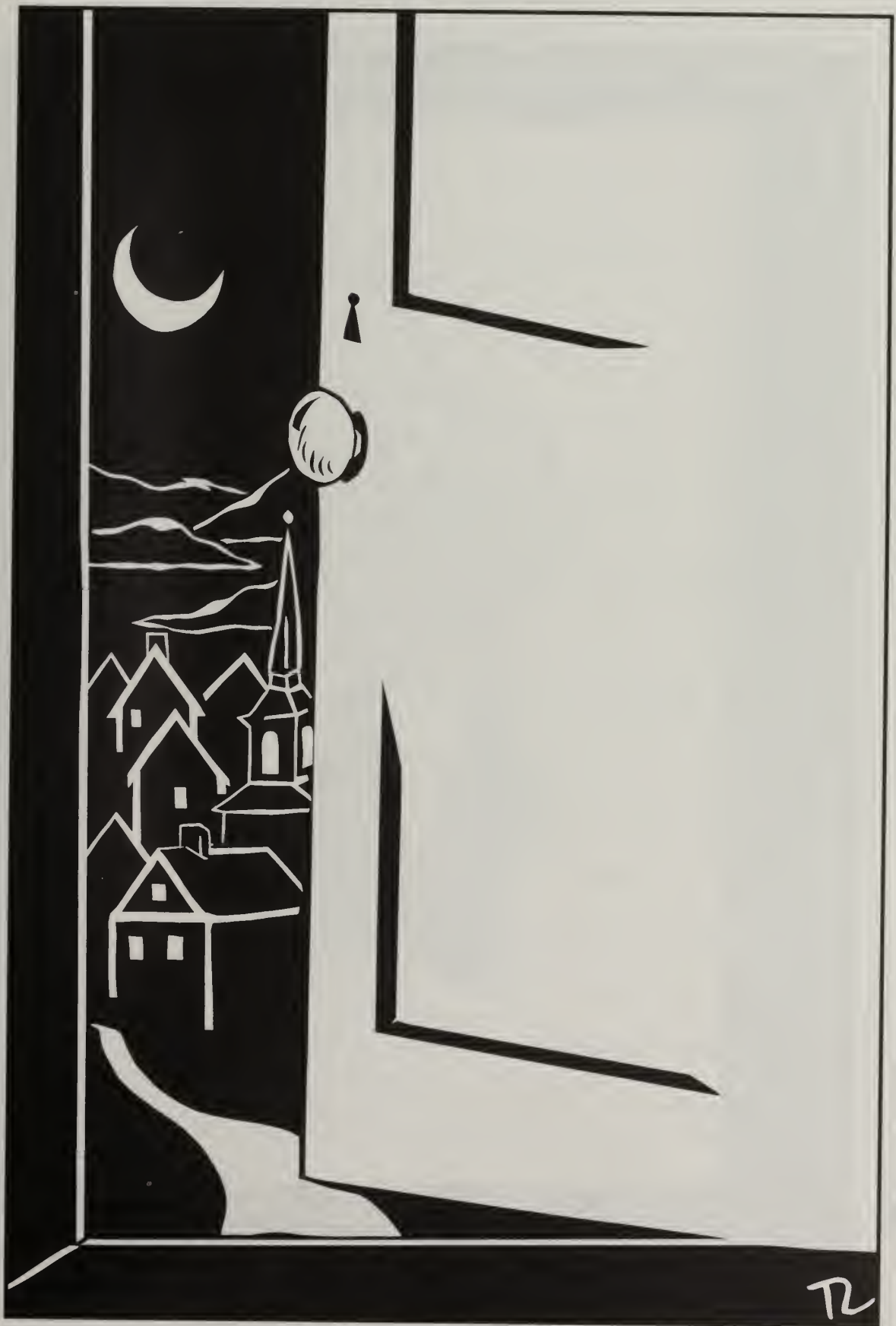
Oh precious thing my valuable thought
 Imaginary friend
 Come sleep with me again
 Fill my lust with dirty things
 An icebox full of liquid dreams
 Lights twinkling from the stars
 Up over the hills
 Skeletons on stilts breeding into dawn
 Push my buttons pull down my pants
 Drill the pleasure in
 Make me sane
 Now I hate. Now I'm sick.
 The madness overflowing thick
 Through the silk sheets of hidden lust
 A broken blood bag of trust

Now I can't even speak
 The incessant tranquilizers cloud my love
 Do you love me regardless?
 I hope I make people sick.
 Tugging at their minds with an illusionary trick.
 The hauntings will inundate me forever
 With lips pale blue
 And the flashbacks of terror
 My infant caught a sneeze
 Sparked by your lightning
 He is struggling to survive
 I used to drown him, now he swims
 The pattern breaks, the anathema wins
 I was psychotic. I was aghast
 Rendered from my past
 I was your son
 What have you done?

Michelle Tetreault



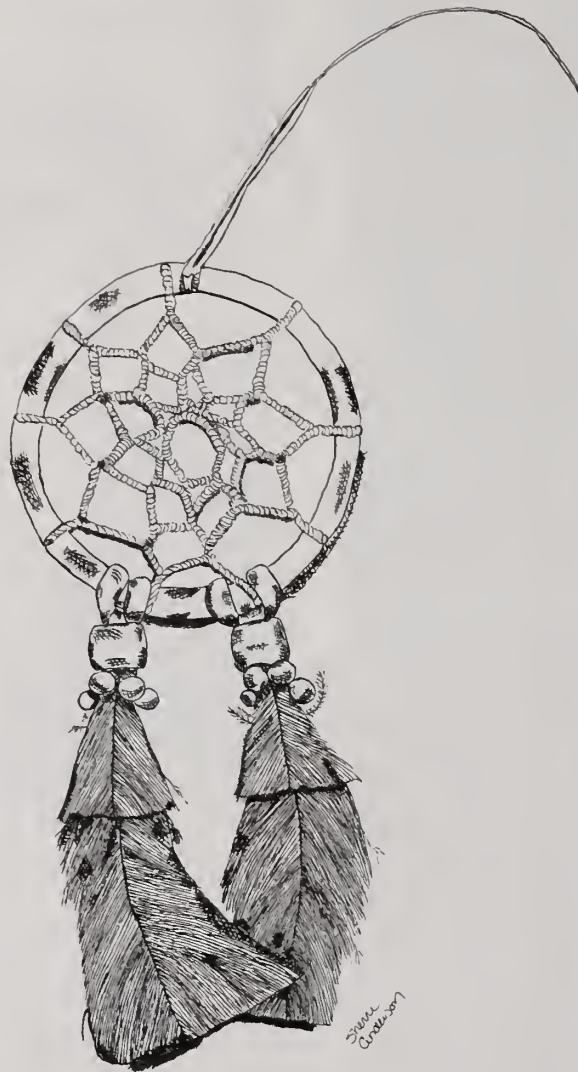
MLT



Travis J. Lizotte

TJ

Sherri Anderson



An Insight Between Souls

I'm unexpectedly caught.
 Caught up in a web of feelings, and desires unfamiliar to my
 being...
 My heart and soul have never felt such strong attraction.
 It pulls at me everytime you come near.
 I can read deep into your eyes.
 Your soul reflects more than you know...
 I see and feel your emotions.
 They speak out softly with kindness.
 I acknowledge a beautiful being; its very existence is
 unappreciated by most.
 Sometimes, unappreciated by its own sense of self...
 Yet, this feeling hinges very close to my own emotions.
 Maybe, this is the destiny of our souls?
 The void that questions the reality of love's meaning within
 both of our souls...
 Yet, no matter what, the desire remains intense.
 Is it a chance worth taking?
 To be left untouched, unexplored would be almost sinful in the
 tragic cases of our souls.
 For every soul harbors within a treasured secret.
 A secret to bring on into death's transition.
 I must now believe destiny has delivered me to mine, upon the
 discovery of your soul.
 Sometime what one soul cannot appreciate, another soul can
 complete and treasure.
 It is not lust that haunts my tender soul, but the immense
 intensity of another's mutual attraction.
 It is within this realm that I wish us to find serenity.
 To find peace. To believe in who we are.
 It is in this realm that I hope to lead the other soul into the
 recognition of true love.
 Love for oneself, and love for another. And, the belief that love
 can be found, and then become a precious part of one's existence.

Deb Turcotte



Laura Goldbaum

We are all players in the game of life,
whether willing participants or not.
There are no set rules or restrictions,
only unknown deadlines.

Nothing is forever,
although sometimes it feels so.
What stresses you today
makes for laughter down the road.

Sometimes you feel like a winner
and at times a loser,
either way — take the time to feel.

Look towards the future,
but don't stop living in the moment.
For this time will not occur again.

Love often and deeply.
This marks the difference
between truly living & just existing.

K.M.Surprenant

Moon Song Summer

Too many nights
lying
side by side
trying not to touch
the brush of knee
rustling at the covers.

One night
awakening to gentle sounds
of neighborhood noises
blue moonlight streams in
kissing the skin of the one

I love
softening hard edges
painful exchanges
heady arguments of the night
illumination
too little forgiveness
in the air.

Janice Reale-Hatem

Moon Song

Whispering midnight blue
an October moon shines
through panes of glass
painting a bath of oblong patches
where you lay sleeping.

On clear nights
you can see her creep higher
to a corner window
where drapes hang closed
leaving only shards of color
to dream by.

Heartstrings

Up you climb
proudly
Eyes turn the corner
then gone.
How dare to wish
even fleetingly
for more baby steps
instead of strong strides
taking you places
I've never been.

■ Janice Reale-Hatem



Sherri Anderson

Five Minutes

I awaken abruptly, being shaken by someone who has a firm grip on my arm. "Come on, we need to pronounce someone." I look up to see her face but Karen has already turned away, bent over retying a sneaker. Having slept in hospital scrubs, I am ready to go. I follow her out the on call room door and up a flight of stairs, still groggy. Like a sleepy puppy trying to keep up, I trail Karen through a set of double doors, then down a quiet hallway.

There are rooms on each side of the ward, mostly darkened with shadows curled sleeping. A constant hiss of hospital machinery is soft in the background. A nurse stands waiting at a doorway where the light is so bright it spills into the hall. She gestures to the first bed, pointing to an elderly patient lying motionless. "It's Mary," she says quietly. "I came into check her and her breathing was shallow. She's a DNR so I didn't call you. She expired a few minutes ago."

I remembered Mary immediately. I had seen her with Karen who was the evaluating physician when she was first admitted two days ago. We rounded on her this morning. She came by ambulance from the State School for the Mentally Ill, an antiquated name conjuring images of crowded wards, patients wandering around aimlessly, or worse, tied in beds with white bandages securing their wrists.

Mary did not look like she had wandered much around the halls of the school where she lived most of her life but she did look like she might have been in bed too much. There were large round sores on one hip, craters which must have been painful to have for so long. You would hardly know it from Mary's face, which seemed to show little suffering. She never complained when I cleaned the sores. She just stared at me the entire time, looking directly into my eyes with her soft brown ones, with a gaze as innocent and trusting as a child's. In her early sixties, she looked younger, with smooth skin and thin white hair that sat like a cap above a round face with a slow, gentle smile.

She had lived in that school since she was four years old, her chart read. Nothing more about why she was left there, or by whom. She was there because of mild to moderate retardation. Physically, she was in Congestive Heart Failure which meant her heart wasn't working as well as it should be so fluid was backing up in her lungs. This was making her heart work harder and making it difficult for her to breath. Karen speculated she must have had a heart attack during the night. Karen wasn't called right away because she was a "DNR" or "do not resuscitate" patient, someone who had an order not to have any additional treatment if their heart stopped beating.

I was rotating through Internal Medicine under the guidance of an experienced resident for the next five weeks, doing on call time every third night. This was my first night on call, and the first time I had seen someone who had just died. I watched my supervising physician intently. "Pronouncing someone is easy, especially if they're a DNR," Karen confided confidently. She pulled a stethoscope from her pocket as she spoke, and with one shake the black plastic coils unfolded effortlessly. She slipped an ear piece in each ear. With one hand she felt for the carotid pulse, with the other she placed the large round diaphragm of her stethoscope on Mary's chest and listened intently. I followed her lead, placing my stethoscope on her thin frame. Hearing no heart sounds I looked carefully at Mary's face for any movement but saw none. Her gown had been pulled open and her breasts lay exposed. I moved the stethoscope several times, still hearing nothing. I put my ear to her mouth but there was no moist breath on my cheek. I was just about to ask what we did next when Karen said "She's gone. Time of death three-seventeen a.m." She took the chart the nurse held out, wrote a brief note and started to walk out of the room. "I'll do the death certificate when I come back for rounds at six. Notify the attending on call at seven. Thank you."

I looked at Mary's face, her eyes now closed. She looked different without her eyes open, older, and her face had a hard, unnatural look. My hand reached out instinctively and gave a small stroke to her thin white hair, startled at how soft and fine it felt, not unlike a baby's.

The nurse was pulling the sheet up over Mary's head when I left. An overwhelming sense of sadness came over me and I fought back tears for a woman I had met once and known less than forty-eight hours. We walked the short distance back without speaking. "I'll wake you up if anything else happens," Karen said as we came to the set of on-call rooms we had left just minutes before. I opened the door, threw back the blanket and crawled back in bed, pulling the sheet up tight to my chin, shivering. I pulled my arm out and looked at my watch. The glow of numbers read three-twenty. Sighing, I closed my eyes, trying to push Mary's face out of my thoughts, hoping to catch a few more hours of sleep.



Kristina Kleursis

Janice Reale-Hatem

Baldpate

The trees, in their winter death sleep, are too perfect.
 Look how exquisite they present themselves
 Barren and grim, yet dubious in their mourning
 I am learning nirvana. Lying here
 Talking to cold blue walls that listen regardless

This room is blinding me
 With its walls without shadows and windows without views
 Here, where my life is measured out
 In doses of ivory dopamine supplements
 Concrete casket of the mind

They enter as vicious animals
 Raping my thoughts
 With their precious psychotropic wonders
 Enervating my dissociate somnolence
 Stripping the color of my walls

Thank God, I am not like them
 In their vacuous white death gowns
 And their perfect Christian hair
 I'd escape from this metered clarity
 If the angel would disappear

I've surrendered my demons
 Given them back
 I guess even karate
 Couldn't stop their attack
 Mass so big it swallows

And what do you make?
 With your fantastic eternal plan
 I am a case study in this bleak institution
 And spoon-fed pollutions
 To cloud this maniac from absorbing solutions

How senseless I must seem, hysterical?
 Obliterating monstrosities out of this funnel
 My soul
 My body is a guinea pig
 My mind is a document

Time is running in symmetrical stasis
 Tick Tock
 The illustrious gong of the clock
 Ticking away my trifles
 As the poison reestablishes my clarity

I am no longer hideous in this terrible blue
 I have much less rancor in spite of you
 The knocking of my door
 The walls just retained their shadows
 The pasty dry mouth

How rational I am becoming
 Tumbling into my melancholy
 The double knocking of my door
 The nurses in their vacuous white death gowns
 The metallic syringe

Somebody's done for!

Amedeo Soutine

Self-worth

She is swimming in a pool of blood that flows from the open wound inflicted by loneliness. For years she has lived a life of solitaire, in complete darkness, blinded by her own illusions. Now in the middle of the room she stands, an outcast, all alone. Male eyes peer into the center of her being looking for answers. I look at her and curse fate's manipulative way.

Sharon Hale



Aurora Berube

David Cockroft





Horror engines poised
Lion rampant on green field
Armageddon clock

Dan Copeland

Mindless entering
Celebration of slaughter
American diet

Dan Copeland

Eric Loveday



How can I sit here for this long.
The dizziness of rising.
The hour is late, the night is quiet and the options are none.
So I sit and wait.
With clouded eyes and dry mouth
I wait for inspiration.

Ken Samoisette

In anxious solitude confining
Fits of madness come and go
Shadow threats the mind designing
Poison flowers twisted grow
Rank with angry venom pollen
Feeding quick suspicious eyes
With distorted visions sullen
All our fears are realized
Sheathed in cold protective armor
Stark indifference blocking sight
Encompassed by one's own creation
New seeds perpetuate the blight

Dan Copeland

America the Beautiful?

The fact that people only look out for themselves,
families no longer have values,
and we no longer value our Creator,
paint a grim picture for our future and our youth.

Also contributing to the de-valuing of America
is that parents have failed to teach their children tolerance
for other peoples, religions, and cultures.

As a result of parents' busy work schedule children spend
less and less time with family and more time with
their "babysitter" the television,
which leaves us with a world of impatient adults
expecting immediate gratification.

In a place where we spend a million dollars building
bigger churches while the homeless and hungry continue
to starve and live on the street, "your poor, your weak,
and your huddled masses" will continue to stay
that way.

A place where technology tells us how to feel
and our bankbook tells us how happy we are.
A place where children are erased, like the mistakes
some think they are.

A place where the laughter of a child is as rare
as a family sitting down for dinner together.

A place where children learn the value of a dollar
before they learn the value of a prayer.

A place where it's as easy to get an abortion, drugs,
or guns as it is to pull up to the pump and fill your tank.

A place like this could only be called America,
and this is a place we need to change.

Melissa Hannay



Shunda Graham



Kristen Pellerin

Suicide

Creeping up the stairs, which led to my destruction.
 Sleepwalking the whole way up and stuck on my thought.
 Rather leave now and be than stay and get caught.
 This is the only way I know to annihilate the dysfunction.

Looking out onto the horizon, clouds must reflect
 So cold up on Earth's surface. Seven stories high
 And shadows of crows string along wondering why
 They can't trick me. Even still I've got prayers to collect.

Amidst the seven stories down I ponder. Heaven help me please.
 No time for reflections now. Mirrors only lie.
 Just close my eyes -breath- no time to cry.
 Falling backwards never felt so good. The ultimate release

My whole existence flying through the wonder of the wind
 All thoughts gone within the seven seconds I sinned.

■ Eric S. Perkins

More than a Dream

Some night I want to collapse
On an open road
And just lay there
And I wouldn't care who saw me
Or if anyone tried to help

I would be unconscious
Unknowing of the dangers that
Just missed me
Of the people who stared at me
Laughed at me or even the few who
Might take pity on me.

I would be dreaming
of all the girls I've seen
but never met and how the one I did
I would never forget.

I would remember that I've been blessed
But had been tortured some too
And how there always was a part of my dream
That was dedicated to you.



Jessica Hamilton

But that part you never knew.

Some night I want to collapse
In a desert underneath a sky filled with stars
Inches away from realizing what has always been so far away

And I wouldn't be afraid to take the step
And I wouldn't be afraid to speak or look you in the eyes
And you wouldn't walk away.

And it wouldn't all be just another dream
It would be real.

Some nights I write craziness,
Expression

I think there's something I want to tell you
I think there's something I want you to know
Cause everytime I look at you
I burn inside.

do you see the way I feel?

do you feel the same?

That's something I want you to tell me
That's something I want to know

Anonymous

For: Miss-Fortunate

I know ignominious misery, she says,
I have lived it entirely
But how do you dance with death?
I asked smilingly

Such fantasies of horror you've absorbed
So brutal and grim
While the spirals swirling through my wineglass
Decay below the rim

You are a shadow
So broken and victimized
How you cry and lie for attention
Your infant is terrorized

All night, to the heavens, I shall chant impetuously
Until you are colorless as bleached hair
And I will curve my consciousness, bewitch myself clean
Disappearing into nowhere

Or will I bring you destruction
You are aghast!
Evading the daemons - bleeding me dry
Like broken glass

Shame: Ah now clearly I remember
How treacherous the diversity
Rendered you soul
In divisions of perversity

Oh wilted splintering tramp
My gorgeous twin descended
How will I wallow in these flowers?
Born and blossomed - perfected - ascended

While the rain washes the pain away
I travel through the innocuous door
Toward the celestial abyss
While you flip like a fish upon a filthy floor

Two, of course we are divided
You are perpetually disastrous
And I ... Am pure as a baby

■ Eric S. Perkins

Five Bullets and a Shattered Dream

6:45 am on a crisp New England morning, the breeze from the harbor drifting through the air in a thick, somber haze. My eyes clenched tight, my fists grinding into them in a circular motion, spreading tears and dried snot across my cheeks. A warm steam drifts from a cup of coffee, untouched, setting next to a black marble ashtray filled with endless cigarette butts ground firmly into an ashy dust. I place my hands in my lap, feeling the cold steel of my husband's revolver. A string of snapshots lies on the table before me, splayed across the tablecloth in a splash of images. A private detective I hired to follow my husband brought these to me yesterday, setting them before me on his desk with a firm look of sympathy briefly flashing across his face.

"I wish I could say I have good news for you, Mrs. Cross," he stated. "But the fact of the matter is your husband's been running around town with every two bit whore in the tri-state area." He paused, his face stern from years of work like this.

"Thank you, Mr. Chandler," I said as I rose from the seat, gathering up the photos and placing them into my purse. "You've been very helpful."

"Look, ma'am, if you don't mind me saying..."

"Yes, Mr. Chandler," I looked him straight in the eyes. My own narrowed to fine slivers of glass. "I do mind. Again, I thank you for your efforts. Good day."

On the train ride home I stared in silence out the window, the dull gleam of the glass reflecting the image of a woman scorned. I stared into the depths of that face, a face that at once had become unfamiliar to me. The faint wrinkles around the mouth, looking like lines etched into the sand on a dreary summer day at the beach. Dark circles drifted around bloodshot eyes like stains left from black coffee. A greasy teenage boy dressed like Marlon Brando stared at me, his eyes dripping over my body as they eased their way up to my face. He shifted a toothpick across his lips, slowly running his tongue over his cigarette stained teeth. I continued to stare numbly at my ghostly twin in the window. The boy spit his toothpick onto the floor. It seemed to fall in

slow motion, drifting lifelessly to the ground, twisting over and over on its drowsy descent to the grimy floor below. The boy looked back up at my face, his eyes following the path of mine to the toothpick on the floor. "Fuckin nutcase," he mumbled.

New tears fill my eyes as they slide across the snapshots. They drift over images of my husband in various states of sexual ecstasy with various women, none of whom I can recall seeing before. Their bodies meld in an intertwining flow, legs and arms become one as they form the embodiment of my utter despair. My fingers dance across the revolver, floating over each small nuance in the shaft, making their way down to the firm base of the handgrip. The weapon seems to weigh more than life itself. I empty a small box onto the table, five shells spilling over the photos in a dance of psychopathic glee. I pick one up, feeling its weight in my palm. It's amazing how a single piece of lead weighing nothing more than a handful of change can end a life in the blink of an eye. But the course of one's life can change in an instant, shifting the flow of emotions from pure ebullition to utter despair in a matter of seconds.

7:13 am a shaky hand holds the gun in my mouth. Cold metal clashes with warm saliva as my teeth bear down into the revolver's shaft. Disconnected eyes watch as a trembling hand spins the chamber. My finger places weight on the trigger, gnawing into the hard resistance that holds the fragile line between this life and the next. My mind travels back to a place in time when childhood innocence shielded these weary eyes from the icy grip of the world. My sister Jackie is lying on our front lawn at our old home in Connecticut. Tears flow between uttered cries as she holds her wounded ankle. I can see dark streams of blood seeping through her fingers, etching a trail into the lines of her hand. I stand in shock, wondering how five minutes earlier we could have been enjoying an unseasonably warm winter day on our bicycles. I can see her knuckles turning white, creating a stark contrast with the murky blood. Reality comes crashing into my mind like a train wreck. It's 1957 and I'm sitting at the kitchen table with a gun in my mouth. My sister died four years ago. The police found her body lying face down in an alley in Chinatown. A single nylon stocking was wrapped around her neck, pulled so tight one of the ends had ripped off. Her purse lay next to her, her personal belongings sprawled across the cold pavement. They said she'd been lying there for three days.

I slowly pull the revolver out of my mouth. A thin line of saliva trails the gun on its way back down to my lap.

"Morning, doll. What's for break..."

His eyes bolt to the snapshots. I continue to stare into my lap.

"How the hell..." His words stumble out quietly, "You dirty fucking..."

I raise the gun from my lap, pointing it directly between his eyes. My hands are shaking beyond control. I can briefly see his face turn pale as his beady eyes fill with comprehension.

"Baby, I can explain," he stutters.

I keep my silence, my eyes averted to the kitchen floor.

"They didn't mean a damn thing to me. You know that, don't you?"

A single tear drips from my eye. My finger grips the trigger.

"Answer me, damn it! Just fuckin say something!"

I close my eyes, hold my breath, and pull the trigger. Click.

The empty chamber.

The room is quiet for one never-ending minute. I remain still in my chair, my eyes closed, my lungs beginning to burn from holding my breath.

Suddenly an immense force plows into me, knocking me from my chair. His body lands on top of mine like a cinder block. He slams his knee into my stomach, finally forcing my lungs to release my forgotten breath. We struggle for the gun, our bodies strung together in a desperate fight for power. My mind flashes to the snapshots. Our bodies twist together like those in the pictures as we crash into the table, sending the ignored coffee mug smashing onto the kitchen floor, inches from my face. My hands struggle to control the revolver, my last salvation in this dying world. He throws a punch at me, connecting with my face and jarring my head onto the cold tile floor. Bright spots flash before my eyes. I can feel warm blood scatter across my matted hair. Another punch jolts a tooth out of place, knocking it into the back of my throat. My finger finds its way to the pistol's trigger. I jab my hand forward, twisting the gun's barrel into my husband's stomach. My finger jerks the trigger. A deafening blast fills the kitchen. My husband's body crumples at the waist, tenses, then falls. All 180 pounds of him come rushing onto my body. I can feel a small patch of warmth spreading across his midsection. His breathing slows ... slows ... slows ... stops.

Silence fills the morning air. Soft raindrops begin to tap against the window, beating out a steady rhythm of solitude. The cold tile against the back of my head creates a stark contrast to the warm blood spilling across my dress. Tears begin to stream from my eyes, flowing over my cheeks in a warm trail of redemption. I close my eyes and savor the first breath of a new life.

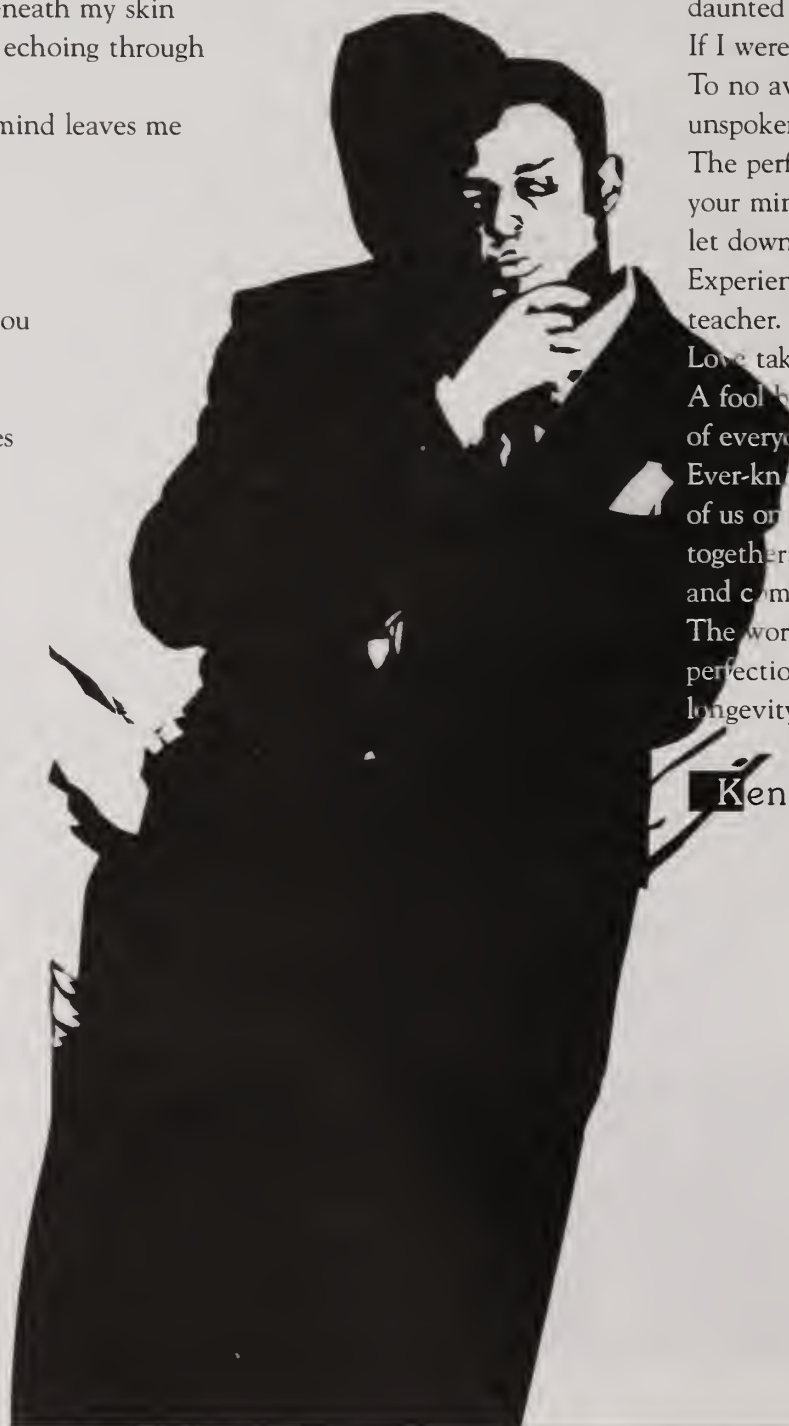
Justin Termini



A Tale of Two Confined Thoughts

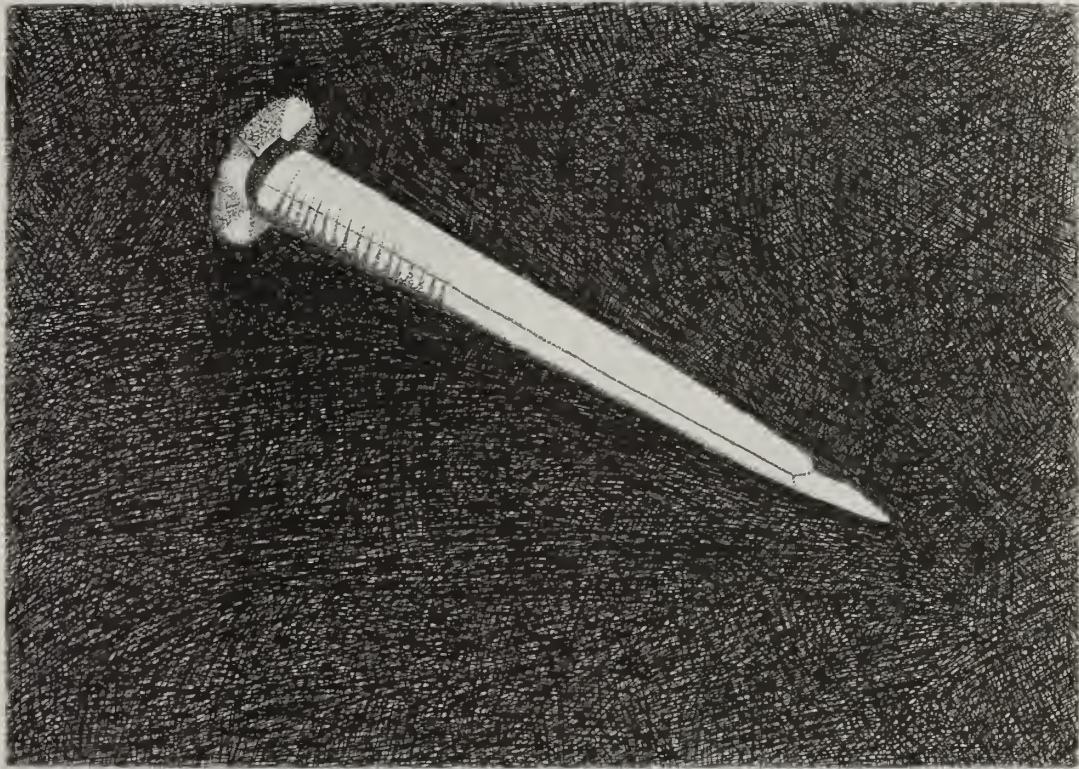
Beauty beholding capture me
torturous
Exalted stillness leaves me
collapsed
The simplicity of your eyes
ever-sending
Glare staring me down
Impossible to rise
View my hunger beneath my skin
Watch the sun rise echoing through
the din
The idea awes my mind leaves me
speechless
The clothes you
Wear -
Exhibitionist
The subtle curves you
Walk -
Crescendo
Deafening my senses
I am held like
ADDICTION
I am held without
END
I am influenced by
DIVERSION

Paki B. Phillips



There you sit,
Looking beautiful but not
giving it any mind
Sorrowful concern
I long for a time we could
share alone
To make our acquaintance warmer
and intimate
My every attention regarding
your esteem
The rapture consumes my reality
Different lives keep us apart
daunted by consequence
If I were more bold perhaps..
To no avail my words left
unspoken
The perfect love you build in
your mind is always the biggest
let down
Experience, the malicious
teacher.
Love takes no prisoners
A fool blind to the onslaught
of everyday calloused lessons
Ever-knowing this I still dream
of us on a white cloud,
together; naked; perfectly warm
and comfortable. For now.
The worst thing about
perfection is its brief
longevity even in fantasy

Ken Samoisette



Paki B. Phillips

Just a Moment

That summer evening
standing in lake water
warm like a lover's arm
gently hugging my waist
with fish that kiss knees
circling round and round
with expectation.

Between the ripples
you never reach for a hand
walking in with small sturdy legs
without a look back.

Janice Reale-Hatem

The ABCs of Life Without You...

alone—broken—confused...
devastated—empty—frustrated...
guilty—hungover—irrational...
jilted—kidded—lonely...
mislead—naive—oppressed...
pathetic—queasy—repulsive...
sullen—tired—unfulfilled...
vacant—withered—xenophobic...
yet, zealous!

K.M. Surprenant

The light of death burns—in her—
A candle's endless wick—
Carried wherever she goes—she knows
She must dance to a different song,

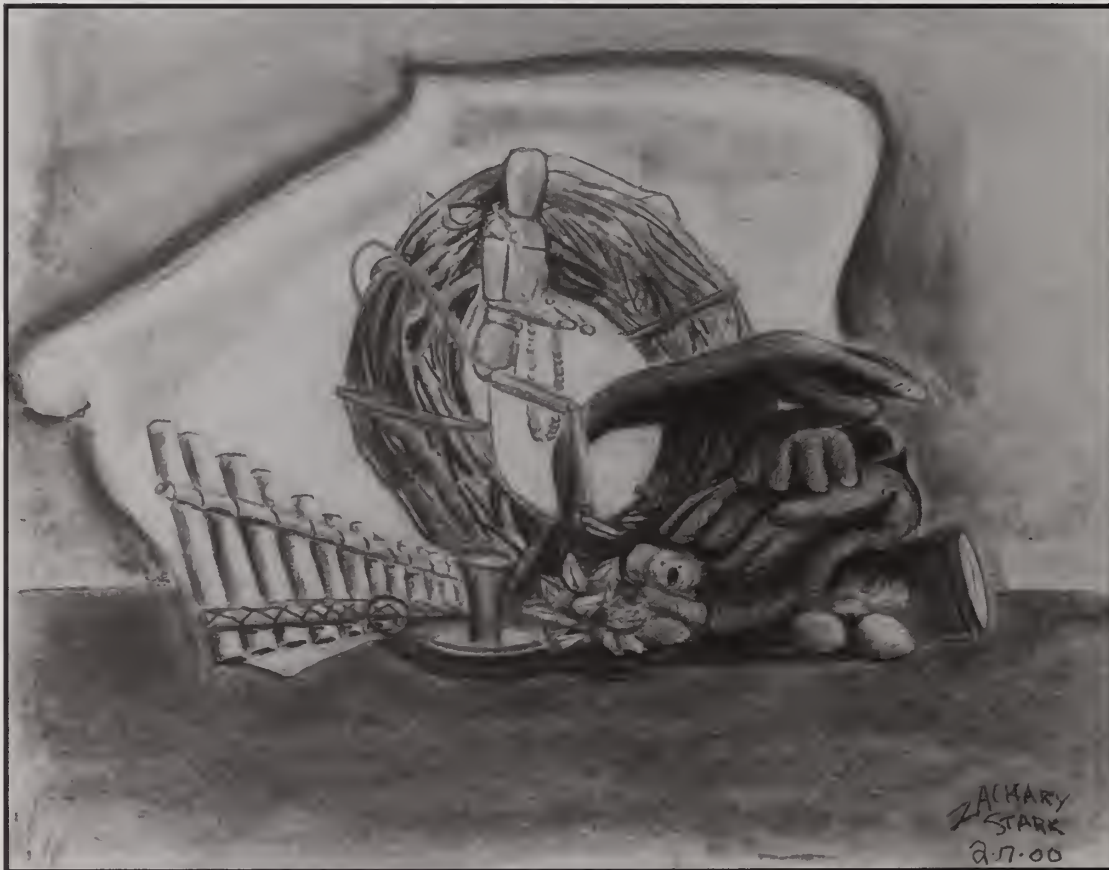
She knows who she is—And what to do
Living—happiness would smother that flame
The song she must find
The dance doesn't need a name.

The mean—hurtful mass—just out of door
It's not the one that pumps the flow—
Through these rigid, ugly, uncaring rocks—
Through most the hearts—best she knows.

She wants no part of that
Knows what's right—And wrong
Finds the strength—dances her dance
She saves her burning soul.

R.S.

Zachary Stark





Craig Liversidge

Wonder

Wonder,
 a limitless series of questions.
 An idea, a thought, a desire,
 soon changed, molded, expanded,
 linked by the threads of our soul.
 Emanating from this single point,
 branching out like a sprout from a seed.
 Smaller almost invisible strands cast towards hope.
 Larger, brightly colored, woven and wound, anchored firmly to security.
 Ribbons of light, captured and reflected, enduring as memories.
 Paths, rails and wings on the air, the horizon remains in the distance.
 Wonder

Craig Liversidge



Kelly J Sanborn
2/28/00



Kelly J.
Sanborn
2/28/00

Winter Blues

Give me the summer I've had all I can take
Give me the music of when the waves break
Give me the hot sun my flesh craves so bad
Give me tickets to Maui so I won't be sad
Give me tranquility which is so hard to find
Give me a hide-out that's one of a kind
Give me the ocean where seagulls soar
Give me the clambakes with lobsters and more
Give me succulent shrimp and oysters half shell
Give me sounds of the ocean that sing and tell
Give me the wet sand that sticks to my feet
Give me pina coladas that are sinfully sweet
Keep your covered-flesh winters
Keep your shovels and plows
Keep your cold hands and sickness
Keep your winter sports know how
Give me sweat -glistening flesh
Give me coconut oil scents
Give me sunburns and Noxema
Give me summer it makes sense



Robert Simring

Kevin Dempsey



Kevin Dempsey

Summer

Inspired by Walt Whitman's "Give me the splendid silent sun"

Give me the red-stained tender-fleshed strawberry.
 Give me boats- rowing, pushing, pulling spilling out into a glassy lake.
 Give me beaches summer- warmed beaches crowded eating, drinking, feasting, of warmth and humanity.
 Give me the sun- intense, powerful rays filling the earth with energy and light.
 Give me the river- running, rushing, splashing, laughing.
 Give me gardens filled with life: humming, vibrating.
 Give me the fruits of these gardens-let me eat ripe tomatoes, emerald-green watermelons.
 Give me the flowers of these gardens- let my eyes be spoiled with reds, oranges, yellows, all hues of greens and purples.
 Give me sandals open and breezy, liberating my toes from the vicious jail houses of boots.
 Give me ice cream and amusement parks, let the ice cream drip down my face.
 Give me summer dresses freeing me from coats and gloves, endless scarves and mittens.
 Give me ice-cold water to quench my thirst in the heat of summer.
 Keep your oppressing heat.
 Keep your sapping, melting, suffocating weather.
 Keep your sandals and your dresses.
 Keep your dripping fruit and gnats.
 Give me hills covered with snow- snow compacted into race-ways for sleds.
 Give me icicles bright and sharp.
 Give me ice-let me fall and prove that man is not so great as he thinks.
 Give me fierce, blinding, gnawing, gnashing, snapping, biting raw power and beauty.
 Let me prove myself against the elements.

Rose Elliott

Doreen Farnham



The Lilt in the Voice of a Phantom

In the living room I sit
Alone.
Looking out the window on a panorama of winter's art.

In the other room I hear
The lilt in the voice of a woman.
It carries me back and away-
Back to old friends as close as family.
The sister of one of these speaks.
All I hear is the voice of a long-lost friend.
The sister of one of these cooks.
All I can smell- all I can taste is meals eaten eons ago.

The time may be now
And the place may be here
But I am back there- hearing the lilt in the voice of a friend
Eating pasteles, arroz y havichuelas.
Seeing not snow, but sand.
And I am weeping.

Rose Elliott



James M. Murphy

Separation

The metal wings of a silver bird
Glided. As they glided, the distance
Grew.
As the distance grew, I
Cried.
As I cried I hated
The silver bird.

Rose Elliott

Parnassus Profiles

A page dedicated to special contributors to this issue of *Parnassus*.

Shunda Graham

Shunda has been interested in photography for years, but this is the first time she has taken formal classes. Originally from Ethiopia, Shunda has been in America for nine years. Over the spring break she visited relatives in Iowa, where she took the picture of the Statehouse that is on the cover of this issue of *Parnassus*. She wanted to go up to the top, but it was closed for renovations, so she could “only take a picture” (and yes, those are real clouds). Shunda says that “when I am behind the lens I am looking for the most interesting feeling I can get.” Photography is also an outlet for her: “It gives me pleasure, there’s no stress, I fly like a bird.”

Shunda would like to make a career out of photography and is especially interested in photographing children. She is planning to renovate a room at home into a darkroom, and she is looking to transfer to a college with a strong photography program. She would also like to return to Ethiopia for a visit, where she is sure she will take “a hundred rolls of film.”

Iowa Statehouse photo - cover

Man with pigeons photo - page 23

Eric S. Perkins

Eric is a multifaceted artist whose creative and intellectual contributions to NECC have been substantial. Several of his poems have appeared in past issues of *Parnassus*, he has served as member of the magazine’s staff, and his artwork is on display in the school’s library. Eric’s career aspirations—still in process—also reflect his eclectic nature. “I would like to be a fashion designer, fashion editor, English professor, or parapsychologist,” he says. If what he has accomplished already is any indication, Eric won’t simply balance such seemingly disparate interests, he’ll make them enhance each other as well.

Eric claims that most of his creativity comes from the supernatural, “from what is ethereal and from what seems to be innocuous; Making the intangible tangible is an important part of what Eric’s work is about. As both a poet and a visual artist, he places the emphasis in his poetry on the visual and is always seeking ways to shape his visions with language that is both beautiful and meaningful. It all has to come together and “hit you somewhere.” In light of that, says Eric, “I try to push the limit on things that may seem controversial because that’s who I am.”

His experience with *Parnassus* has helped him feel at home with the poetic process. “I’ve learned that what I have to say in poetry is meaningful and interesting, that I can successfully kill my angel, and by doing so I can, in turn, write more creatively.”

Citadel - page 7

Suicide - page 25

For: Miss Fortunate - page 27

All text and layout for this issue of Parnassus was accomplished on a Macintosh Computer.

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